

Fighting the Rim Fire has been a costly effort, but the communities, infrastructure and natural resources saved have proved the success of the joint leadership team directing the effort, said Southern Area Blue Team Incident Commander Mike Wilkins.

"The cost of the fire is huge," said Wilkins. "We've spent a significant amount of money, but saved far more values at risk than we spent. We regret we've lost some structures and that resources have been impacted, but we're feeling good about how we've impacted the local economy."

The Blue Team joined with CAL FIRE, the Stanislaus National Forest, Yosemite National Park and local fire departments to tackle the complex fire, which began August 17 near Buck Meadows.

Nancy Koerperich, who represents CAL FIRE at the Rim Fire, called the firefighting effort "one big family," which managed to work out any differences and meld their missions.

"I believe that if we had broken up and let CAL FIRE run state issues, the Park run Park issues and the Forest Service run Forest issues, we'd have been far less successful, and the fire would have been far bigger," said Koerperich.

Among the successes of the unified command team:

- Bulldozers and handcrews built and improved fire lines, deployed water hoses, and started backfires to successfully stop the fire from reaching thousands of homes in Pine Mountain Lake, Tuolumne City and other towns on the fire's western flank.
- On the eastern flank, the Hetch Hetchy reservoir continued to deliver drinking water to 2.6 million people in the San Francisco-Bay area, despite the fire burning up to its southern shore.
- The eastward spread of the fire into Yosemite National Park was halted by the construction of a containment line in advance of the flaming front, which was then strengthened with extensive burn-out operations before the arrival of the fire.
- Firefighters laid sprinklers and cleared brush to successfully protect two groves of giant sequoias in Yosemite National Park.
- Firefighting efforts helped spare hundreds of millions of dollars of power lines, power poles and electrical substations on the western side of the fire.